
Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada

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Edited by
Larry Prochner and Nina Howe

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Education in Canada



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We dedicate this volume to the pioneers of early childhood care and education in Canada for their work on behalf of children and families, as teachers, volunteers, and researchers. We would like to thank our spouses, Barb and Bill, and our children, Isabel, Ana, and Nick, for their support.

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Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada

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Introduction

Formal programs for the care and education of young children in Canada have a history that goes back almost 200 years. Nonetheless, issues surrounding services for our youngest Canadians continue to be hotly contested as the current century comes to a close. As one commentator noted, the history of programs for young children in North America has a “complicated and distinctive character, one filled with various strains and tensions” (Schickedanz 1995, 6). This character is reflected in the present: the expanding ecology of early childhood education is one of the defining features of the field in late-twentieth-century North America (Peters and Klinzing 1990). Early childhood care and education (ECCE) in Canada is striking for its tremendous diversity – some would say fragmentation – on such key issues as curriculum, financing, and teacher education. The range of programs and philosophies included in the rubric of ECCE can be overwhelming for parents, practitioners, academics, researchers, and policy makers alike.

The diversity of the field is evident in the vocabulary used to describe programs and services. While some of the historical terms are infrequently used today, others remain in current practice with different meanings. Terms used to describe educational programs included *infant schools*, *nursery schools*, *preschools*, *play schools*, and *kindergartens*. Programs designed primarily for the purpose of caring for children in the temporary absence of their parents included the *crèche*, *day nursery*, *day care*, *child care*, *foster home care*, and *family home day care*. The entire enterprise, from an educational standpoint, was termed nursery education beginning in the 1920s and, later, *early childhood education*. From the 1920s, child study was the term used to describe the primarily psychological study of children and families. Because child study was an applied field from the outset, it was closely linked to developments in nursery school and parent education. In this book some attention is paid to public school kindergarten as an early

childhood setting, primarily in relation to historical developments (e.g., teacher education). However, because school-based programs are better documented in the existing literature and more uniform in their character, we chose to focus on child day care in its various forms.

Variation within ECCE is reflected in the multidisciplinary nature of this volume. In creating the collection, we set out to document what we determined to be key issues in the field: What programs are currently available to parents and what are their origins? How have adults been prepared to work in these programs? What do the adults do with the children? What policies guide the programs? How has the field reflected on itself through research? We believe that the book will be of interest to students, teachers, and researchers in child study, early education, policy studies, and history. The authors of the essays in the collection include psychologists, sociologists, historians, teacher educators, and social policy analysts, as well as those who place themselves within several of these areas. Some authors are parents who have experienced the challenge of finding good child care, the early morning rush to the child care centre and then to work, and the daily contact with teachers and other parents at a centre. Some authors have also been teachers who know firsthand the labour and rewards of teaching young children. We believe that the result is a book that brings together points of view seldom presented on the same stage: historians, policy analysts, educators, and researchers sit side by side. There are missing voices, however, leaving a challenge for work in this area in the future. Examples are voices of children and teachers, representatives of minority cultures, and Aboriginal peoples.

Our assumption is that an understanding of history has a critical role to play in current conceptions of issues. For this reason, the first five chapters tell the story of the care and education of young children in Canada, and the field of child study in general, from a historical standpoint; the remaining chapters describe features of the present landscape and suggest a vision for the future. In their review of child study history in Canada, Rooke and Schnell (1991, 200) noted that child care and policy related to children and families were striking for their absence in the historiography of childhood in Canada. Further, what we do know is sometimes plain wrong, as Hewes (1997) pointed out in a provocatively titled paper, "Fallacies, phantasies, and egregious prevarications in early childhood education history." The authors in this collection take a step toward rectifying this, and in doing so they demonstrate that care and education services for young children have a long history. The history is not interpreted as a series of purposeful steps that reach a point in the present in which answers to our questions are clear. Instead, the past – both recent and distant – is revealed as a complex entanglement of issues, as Susan Prentice

terms the situation in her essay in this book. The fragmentation of current services has its roots in a fragmented historical development. The means of balancing children's interests, parents' interests, and society's interests have never been *less* clear than in the present, as Richardson described in her postmodern view of the history of childhood in Canada at the end of the twentieth century: "As the century closes we are faced with our restructured and seemingly endangered family, confusing sexualities, fractured public schools, problematic health care and an apparent rebellion against answers from the past including the efficacy of the welfare state. We have turned an ambivalent eye on the poor, weak, and young, once the recipients of our benefactions. Wariness about the future and growing disbelief in inevitable progress through science is reflected in an ambiguity about the identity we have thrust on the child in time" (1996, 392-3).

As Nina Howe points out in her concluding chapter, "there are no simple answers" or formulas for the one best way to serve the diverse needs of children and families in Canada. Yet we believe that the essays in this collection contribute to a creative reframing of the questions.

Organization

We believe that this collection of essays represents a critical approach to ECCE in Canada that reflects the international trend to re-examine early childhood services in fresh ways (Hayden 1999; Kagan and Cohen 1996; Taylor and Woods 1998). The collection begins with a survey of historical developments in child care and early education in Canada, from the infant schools of the early nineteenth century to the renewal of interest in ECCE as a social reform issue in the 1960s. It is important to note that the historiography of ECCE in Quebec is different from that in English Canada. Of particular relevance to this book, as historian and sociologist Turmel (1997) has pointed out, Quebec had no Child Study Movement similar to that in English Canada. The essays by Donna Varga, Mary Wright, and Kathleen Brophy share a concern with the role of adults in early childhood programs and how best to prepare them for this role. In Chapter 2, Varga examines the history of teacher education, with a focus on the different "tracks" that developed for kindergarten teachers and child care providers. Wright's rich description of the influence of academic child study on the history of early education sets the scene for Brophy's history of child development laboratories. In Chapter 5, Alan Pence and Allison Benner present an original analysis of child care research over the past three decades that indicates where we have come from and what work remains to be done. Taken together, the chapters in Part 1 provide the narrative of the development of ECCE in Canada. Some themes in this story include the nature of change, the source of ideas, and the interaction of various ECCE contexts.

First, development occurred as incremental change periodically interrupted by big events – for example, the birth of the Dionne quintuplets and their impact on child study research in Canada. Another theme is that ideas have many sources. Programs developed in local contexts but were influenced by national and international developments. Both individuals and ideas crossed borders – for example, the spread of the kindergarten movement in the early part of the twentieth century. A third theme is the interaction of ideas in different contexts. An action in one context had a reaction in another. And the reaction sometimes resulted in the modification of the original idea – for example, the interplay of government policy and research, or teacher education and life in kindergarten classrooms.

Chapters 6 to 10 provide a set of current contexts in ECCE. Ellen Jacobs describes the range of child care programs currently available to families in Canada, and Nina Howe, Jacobs, and Lisa Fiorentino summarize the main approaches to the early childhood curriculum. Both these chapters reflect historical themes noted above – particularly, the multiple sources of ideas and the interplay of ideas in different contexts. A central factor in child care quality is the child care provider, which is the focus of Chapter 8 by Donna White and Davina Mill. White and Mill pay particular attention to the importance of routine interactions between children and adults. In Chapter 9, Martha Friendly details the history of child care as a social policy issue on the national stage – which unfolds as a story of disappointment. She illustrates the way that largely incoherent federal and provincial policies have led to a “non-system” of child care in Canada. One of the outcomes is a permissive approach to free market child care. In Chapter 10, Susan Prentice provides a critical look at the politics of child care auspice and the impact of such politics on quality. In concluding the collection, Howe analyzes the historical and current social issues in ECCE described in the chapters, and offers a vision of early childhood care and education in Canada for the future.

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Part 1
Historical Contexts

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1

A History of Early Education and Child Care in Canada, 1820-1966

Larry Prochner

Describing the history of child study, Hawes and Hiner (1991) observed, "Clio's newest offspring is robust, but it is clearly still in its infancy" (3). The historical study of early childhood care and education (ECCE) is one component of a critical approach to child study. Current developments and issues are informed by a context that includes developments in the past (Ferguson, Pence, and Denholm 1987, 200). Yet child study history is a "truly marginal sub-specialty" in Canada, as described in a survey of the literature by Rooke and Schnell (1991, 179). They described it as a field "fraught with ambiguity, conceptual confusion, and incompleteness" (179), with child care and nursery school history particularly "undeveloped" areas (200). In fact, a small body of literature on ECCE and related services did exist by 1991 (Corbett 1989; Desjardins 1991; Dumont-Johnson 1980; Schulz 1978; Simmons 1984; Sutherland 1976), and additional work has been completed since that time (Prentice 1993; Prochner 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Varga 1993, 1997). This chapter builds on this literature by presenting a national picture of the history of formal care and education programs for young children in Canada. The emphasis is on child care and preschool, from the opening of the first infant schools in the nineteenth century to the revival of interest in early care and education in the mid-1960s. The aim is to further our understanding of current developments in programs and policies by reviewing their evolution over the past 150 years. This is, admittedly, an ambitious task. The chapter presents a possible history of care and education for young children based on sources located in public and private archives, research libraries, newspapers, and various secondary sources. It is not an exhaustive inventory of programs. Rather, programs were selected to represent the type and range of initiatives characteristic of different periods. The history is divided into three parts: a review of the European programs that served as the inspiration and model for those in Canada; the story of early education in

Canada; and finally, child care programs for wage-earning parents.

“Whatever [the ladies of the society] have attempted, has been done only with a desire to ameliorate the condition of those who are early exposed to vice, or to give the young mind a greater store of purer and more enlarged ideas” (Montreal Infant School Society 1831, 7). These words, contained in the first report of the Montreal Infant School Society in 1831, capture the spirit of early education in Canada, not only in the nineteenth century, but also throughout most of the twentieth century. At the heart of all the programs was the belief that there are significant benefits, for both individuals and society, from providing children with formal education or out-of-home care. The corollary to this idea is that some children are at risk from the care they receive in their homes and communities. Most of the models of early intervention that developed in Europe, which were based on this key premise, eventually became part of the Canadian and US experience. However, there are important differences in the way they developed in each case. Patterns of immigration, industrialization, and the nature of private charity all played a role in creating a specifically Canadian history of preschool and child care. Nineteenth-century Canada consisted of indigenous peoples and a settler population spread over a vast geographic area. A handful of small cities served as the first stopping place for immigrant families from Great Britain and Europe. Canada was not heavily industrialized compared with the United States, even by the end of the nineteenth century, and the family was still the centre of the economy. The dominance of the English-Christian tradition in schools and charitable institutions meant that many of the programs for children took on the job of assimilating newcomers into the language and values of the Anglo majority.

As Rooke (1977) has indicated, “the aim of child study history is not to make an issue of whether such and such a practice originated in X, and was transferred to Y or Z, but to establish the distinctive Canadian mentality which led to a particular response” (167). Not all types of programs were established everywhere in Canada either simultaneously or in the same way. Following settlement patterns, the first classes that opened for children under the age of seven were infant schools in Eastern Canada. As immigration increased in the 1840s and 1850s, and cities in the east underwent rapid population growth, a greater range of institutional programs were established, including those in orphanages, foundling homes, and nurseries. A similar phenomenon occurred in Western Canada in the early twentieth century.

Another feature revealed in the history of Canadian child care and education is that most of the privately sponsored programs, ranging from charity kindergartens and nursery schools to day nurseries, were organized

and headed by women. With the exception of public school kindergartens, almost all programs for preschoolers prior to the Second World War were in the hands of private charity. State support for the working poor is a relatively recent development. Groups of women under many different banners, including church groups, local branches of the Canadian Council of Women, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Red Cross, volunteered their time, energy, and expertise to ease the burden of poor wage-earning women by providing their children with care and education during their absence.

A further feature noted in the history is the debate over the role of parents as opposed to the state or private charity in providing education and care for young children. In general, child care was provided as a social service for poor families. It was considered justifiable only insofar as it helped families in times of critical need. If it appeared that mothers were employed outside the home by choice and not necessity, the sponsors of nursery services, and later the professional staff that managed them, were generally critical. One of the most damning charges that could be made against a day nursery was that mothers used the service to provide themselves with leisure time. A Hamilton journalist, Joseph Tinsley, posed the question to the manager of the Hamilton Crèche in 1904:

Tinsley: I suppose mothers who wish to spend a day at the beach or leave the city, or have a desire to get rid of their offspring for an hour or so, leave babies in charge of the matron?

Manager: Oh, dear, no! We watch very closely all our customers. The children, in all cases, belong to women who have to work for a living (Tinsley 1904).

The view that parents were primarily responsible for early education was also part of the debate over kindergartens in public schools. Even at the end of the twentieth century, compulsory attendance in kindergartens is required in only one province in Canada, New Brunswick. Schools have historically had difficulty in accommodating all those children whose attendance was compulsory, and many school boards have seen the kindergarten as a frill to be eliminated in the effort to balance budgets and ease overcrowding. The kindergarten program has been made to prove its worth, not once, but time and time again. Current developments in child care and preschool in Canada reflect some of these historical debates. There is still no national plan directing child care policy across all provinces and territories, and kindergarten continues to have an ambiguous place in schools. Nonetheless, it remains at the forefront of what governments regard as either key social reforms (adding preschool or child care programs) or basic cost-cutting measures (taking them away).

The European Tradition

Early Education

Formal programs aimed at the education and care of young children were rare in Europe prior to the late eighteenth century. From the earliest times, the family and community assumed joint responsibility for children's upbringing. The first examples of programs for children under the age of seven – called infant schools – were directed at poor children. They were preventive in nature, meaning their aim was to decrease crime, ignorance, disease, and political instability through early intervention. They incorporated ideas from both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke. From Rousseau, the earliest programs (e.g., Robert Owen's) adopted the principle of play as the natural business of children. Even later and more structured infant schools recognized children's need to play and, as a result, introduced recess into their daily schedules. The modern playground had its origins in the infant school of the 1830s. The schools also incorporated Locke's optimistic view of early education and human potential. Locke's sensationalist approach to learning (knowledge comes first through the senses) had a profound influence on the early infant schools. Their promoters believed that a child's future was limited only by a teacher's imagination and the richness of the school environment.

John Frederic Oberlin, who was a Lutheran minister, established one of the first infant schools in Europe in 1770 in the Alsace region of France. The school operated on a part-time basis as an educational experiment and a mission of the church. Children were taught basic hygiene, social manners, nature studies, and such practical skills as knitting. Oberlin hoped that some of the school culture acquired by the children would be carried back into their homes to influence their parents. As Singer (1992) observed in her analysis of the history of child care and the influence of psychology, Oberlin's "knitting schools" contained themes found in most subsequent preschools over the next two centuries: they were envisioned as a means of social reform, they stressed the importance of early intervention, and they were inconsistent in their attitude toward the role of teachers and mothers. With reference to the last point, while Oberlin placed great importance on the educative and nurturant value of maternal affection and care, he did not believe that the children could receive maternal care from their own mothers. Instead, this care would be attained through contact with young women trained in mothering in a special setting away from the home.

Other examples of programs for young children of working parents are scarce during this period. An exception is the refuge for infants established in Paris in 1800 by Adelaide de Pastoret. Pastoret was a member of the political and intellectual elite living in post-revolution Paris. Distressed by the

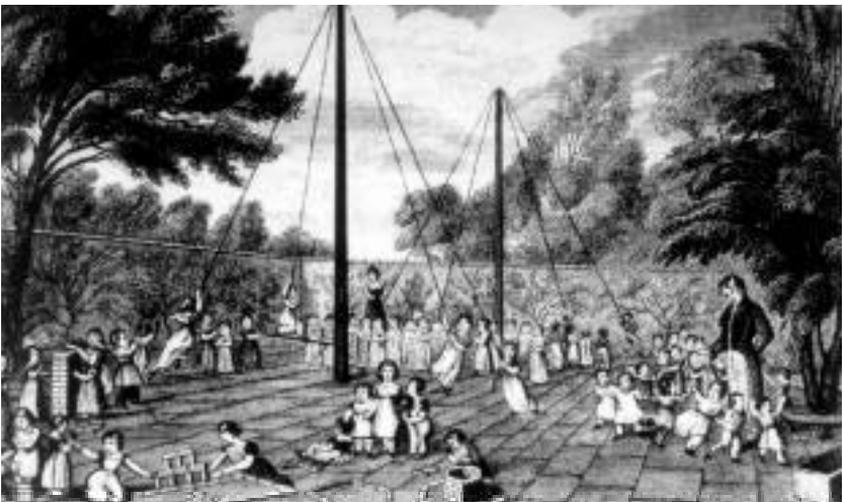
plight of the young children of working mothers and inspired by Oberlin's example, she established a refuge for the infant children of wage-earning mothers. The refuge had the luxury of heat and was furnished with twelve cribs. While Pastoret may have planned for only twelve children, many more actually attended. The Irish writer Maria Edgeworth visited in late 1802 and reported seeing twenty-eight children. The matron, Soeur Françoise, oversaw the operation of the *asile* (or refuge), while a "family woman" was employed as a combination wet-nurse and housekeeper. In some cases mothers returned to the *asile* several times a day to nurse their babies and all the children returned to their homes at night. This latter point was critical to the idea of the refuge as a daytime only care facility, for Pastoret "did not wish to destroy the tie of natural affection" (Edgeworth in Colvin 1979, 39). The refuge was austere and lacked any of the luxuries found in the homes of wealthier Parisians. There was a conscious desire to avoid spoiling the children during their daily stay at the refuge. "Nothing in [the] house was above the condition of the children," noted Edgeworth, "nothing could tend to give them ideas that might make them discontented with their lot" (Edgeworth in Colvin 1979, 39-40). The *asile* was a short-lived experiment, but the reasons for its demise and even the date of its closure are unclear. One account stated that the two staff found the work exhausting and soon quit. Another suggested that the effort was not understood by the citizens of Paris at the time. However, that a temporary refuge would have existed at all at the beginning of the nineteenth century is remarkable. The preferred child care option for all but the poorest mothers was the use of a wet-nurse. Pastoret targeted the most impoverished women for her service, many of whom were day labourers in the markets of Paris with few options for child care.

Maria Edgeworth made Pastoret's refuge the subject of a novella titled *Madame de Fleury*, which was published in 1809. As a result, although Pastoret's *asile* was no longer open, the idea gained widespread attention in Great Britain. Edgeworth may have inspired the industrialist and social reformer Robert Owen to open the first infant school in England in 1816. He called the school the Institution for the Formation of Character. Owen built the school for the children of workers in his cotton factory in New Lanark, Scotland. The rational infant school was based on the egalitarian principles of Rousseau and was an attempt to raise children above their circumstances. The school admitted children over the age of one. Like Rousseau, Owen rejected the use of books until children reached the age of ten or twelve. The primary occupation of the children was play, and it was through the structuring of children's amusements that their characters were to be formed. Along with social reform, the school offered practical benefits to Owen. He maintained that the school led to decreased theft in the

factories and created a ready supply of trained workers. As a result of his efforts, “all the houses in the village, with one hundred and fifty acres of land around it, formed parts of the establishment, all united, and working together as one machine, proceeding day by day with the regularity of clock-work” (Owen [1857] 1967, 135-6). The schools were suited to Owen’s business as well as his humanitarian interests as a means of quieting worker discontent at a time when resistance to industrialism was sometimes violent.

For the first teachers of the New Lanark school, Owen chose the “simple-minded kind-hearted” James Buchanan and the seventeen-year-old Molly Young, “who of the two, in natural powers of mind, had the advantage over her new companion” (Owen [1857] 1967, 139). Young was responsible for the babies, and Buchanan took charge of the older children. Owen personally trained them in the methods of the infant school. Both teachers were instructed never to beat or threaten the children, but rather “to speak to them with a pleasant countenance, and in a kind manner and tone of voice” (Owen [1857] 1967, 139).

In 1819, Buchanan moved to London to become the teacher at the first infant school in that city. While in London, Buchanan convinced Samuel Wilderspin, a school teacher, of the benefits of infant schools. Wilderspin became superintendent of a school himself and founded the Infant School Society to promote the system. This school and the many infant schools that followed departed from Owen’s plan, instead undertaking to apply the monitorial system of schooling devised by Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell in the early nineteenth century. While infant schools grew in number and flourished in the 1820s, they became increasingly rigid and subject-



Infant school playground, England, c. 1820

oriented as they strove to achieve both efficiency and moral purpose. They typically housed 200 or more children from approximately two to six years of age, all in a single room. To manage the large numbers, children were contained in galleries or tiers of seats, and older children were trained as monitors. The schools had playgrounds attached to them, and the children were permitted to play within the restrictions of the program. As a result, play usually involved leading the children in a series of movement exercises. Wilderspin became the self-appointed leader of the Infant School Movement and published books on his system. Infant schools were then both popularized and standardized, as similar institutions were established abroad through the influence of organizations such as the Home and Colonial Infant School Society.

Part of the success of Wilderspin's system was his promotion of the infant school as a means of reducing crime, a call repeated by advocates of preschools in the twentieth century (Schweinhart and Weikart 1997). He pointed to the moral neglect of children by working mothers as a major contributor to juvenile delinquency. Wilderspin was generally critical of the ability of working class parents to nurture their young. Moreover, he viewed the root cause of crime to be the immorality of the family itself. He noted, "As appalling as the effects of juvenile delinquents are, I think we may discover a principal cause of them in the present condition and habits of the adult part of the laboring classes" (Wilderspin 1825, 38).

Wilderspin believed, as did Oberlin, in the power of infant education (i.e., through infant schools) as a form of parent education. Accordingly, as a result of their experience in the infant school, his hope was that children would "rise up to cultivate and humanize their parents" (Wilderspin 1825, 17). Infant schools briefly flourished before succumbing to problems of inadequate funding, poor promotion, and the popularization of the idea that young children's minds were harmed by early academic instruction, which caused undue "mental excitement." At the same time, educators such as Pestalozzi and, later, Froebel, stressed that mothers were the first and natural teachers of children. Early education for the masses in infant schools, featuring recitations from the Bible by several hundred youngsters, did not fit within this maternal model. The success of the kindergarten in North America followed the decline of the infant school. Although the kindergarten developed partly as an alternative to the rigid structure of the infant school, it borrowed some of its most powerful ideas. The horticultural metaphor of children as plants and teachers as gardeners was also a favourite of Wilderspin's.

The kindergarten was not conceived as a preschool in the modern, secular sense. It was tied to Froebel's understanding of the workings of

the universe and the proper path to religious and spiritual growth. This metaphysical dimension of the kindergarten was part of its original appeal. However, it later became its downfall, when it was seen to be out of fashion with modern, scientific thinking. By the twentieth century, Froebel's "old-fashioned" notions were criticized by North American psychologists, educators, and philosophers. In addition, teachers in overcrowded, urban schools in Canada and the United States in the 1880s and 1890s had difficulty following the exacting techniques of the original kindergarten program. In the early twentieth century, the kindergarten was competing with supporters of the nursery school for a similar clientele. The nursery school evolved out of British and continental experiments aimed at giving children from poor backgrounds a head start. The persons most closely associated with its early history are Margaret and Rachel Macmillan and Maria Montessori. Margaret Macmillan's innovative "camp school" at Deptford, England, bore little resemblance to current nursery schools, which are typically half-day programs for children three to four years old. When the camp opened in 1911, it took in a group of girls aged six to fourteen (Steedman 1990) for an overnight stay. They ate their evening meal at the camp, bathed, and slept at night in tents or the open air. After breakfast, they went to school and from school they returned to their own homes. The camp experience was designed as a therapeutic intervention to strengthen the girls' bodies, which reflected the Macmillans' understanding of the ideas of Seguin and sensory education. A Baby Camp for children under five started in 1914. This approach to nursery education was disseminated through a training school in Deptford and through books, articles, and lectures by Margaret Macmillan.

Another promoter of the nursery school as a cure for social ills was Maria Montessori. Montessori was an Italian doctor and educator who developed a system of education based on carefully prescribed methods. Some aspects of Montessori's system were the same as Froebel's, including a grounding in the philosophy of idealism, the use of specialized teaching materials to support educational objectives, and a concern for the spiritual growth of young children. Although Rousseau's influence on Montessori is evident, her approach to education was far more psychological than that of her predecessors. In this respect, her system was equally a product of the twentieth century. She focused on the development of individuals, which was to be achieved through carefully planned interaction with materials. Montessori's system also incorporated the earlier work of Jean-Marc Gaspard Itard and Edouard Seguin with training intellectually and physically disabled children (Montessori [1912] 1967). She believed that

all children could reach their social, moral, and intellectual potential if they had appropriate experiences in a prepared environment.

When Montessori began her work with poor families in a slum tenement in Rome in 1907, she was trying to do more than give children an academic head start. Her program, which took place in what she called a Children's House, was aimed at supporting wage-earning mothers by providing day care and training children in hygiene, practical skills, and social manners. The Children's House was part of the community, and the director lived on site. The Children's House was thus similar to settlement houses in Great Britain and North America at the turn of the century. Like many other prominent early childhood educators, Montessori was concerned about the lack of supervision for young children of wage-earning mothers. Left to their own devices within the degrading conditions of the slum, the tenement children became "ignorant vandals" (Montessori in Braun and Edwards 1972, 116). The Children's House offered an orderly, hygienic, safe, and stimulating alternative to life on the street. The Montessori system is another example of a preventive program that aimed to protect children from a disorderly and adult-controlled world. While Montessori's system was largely ignored in North America until the early 1960s, and the British nursery school was regarded as too focused on health and hygiene, the nursery school was identified by child psychologists and the Child Study Movement as having a key role in children's mental health. The role of the nursery school in the Child Study Movement in Canada is described in detail in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book.



A visit to a model crèche, Paris, 1846

Child Care

The divisions between child care facilities and those that had an educational mandate were not always clear. Many child care services offered some type of educational program. This took the form of practical domestic skills for young girls – sewing, cooking, and child care – second language learning, Bible study, and modified kindergarten programs. The infant schools of the nineteenth century and the charity kindergartens and nursery schools in the twentieth doubled as child care services. Nonetheless, the history of child care is distinct from that of early education in that it is based on a tradition of child and maternal welfare, and its roots are in health and social welfare rather than education. Although the first infant day care is generally regarded to be Pastoret's refuge, described above, the Crèche Movement, initiated by Jean Firmin Marbeau in Paris in 1844, had a greater influence on day care in North America (Prochner 1996a). Americans who visited model crèches in Paris were inspired to establish similar institutions on their return, although few crèches were constructed on such a grand scale as the one in the illustration taken from a book promoting the crèche idea.

The aim of the crèche in France and North America was to enable mothers of young children to earn a wage outside the home by providing child care for their children. The institutions, called nurseries, day nurseries, or crèches in Canada and the United States, were linked to poverty and the notion that the poor should be encouraged to help themselves through their own labour.

Early Education in Canada

Infant Schools

One of the first infant schools in Canada was opened in Montreal, on St. Dominique Street in 1828, by "several ladies of the city" (Montreal Infant School Society 1831, 4). It offered care and instruction for poor children, according to Lancaster's Infant School system. In 1829, the women opened a boarding department for children who needed longer term care; during the first year, they boarded twenty children. A second charity infant school opened on the western part of the island, in St. Anne, prior to 1831, along with several private schools. This extension of the infant school from the poor to the wealthy was consistent with developments in the United States in cities such as New York and Boston. As the Montreal Infant School Society (1831) explained in its report, "though originally introduced for the poorer classes, the system of instruction is equally calculated to produce correct principles in the children of all classes" (6). Infant schools were well attended almost from their creation, and the

Montreal school was followed by similar schools in Charlottetown, Halifax, Quebec City, and Toronto (Phillips 1957). The Quebec City school was opened in 1834 by the British and Canadian Infant School Society, and in its first year it accommodated 100 to 150 children each day. In its report, the Society emphasized that boys and girls, Protestants and Catholics attended the school in equal numbers. The Montreal and Quebec City schools did not stress their role as a support for wage-earning mothers. The greater portion of their reports promoted the educational function of the schools. The British and Canadian Infant School Society expanded on the need for teachers to treat children in a kindly manner as a way of meeting its educational aims: "Inasmuch as the fundamental principle of the Infant School system is love, it should be the constant endeavour of the Teacher to win the affection of the children, and then cause them to feel pleasure in submission to his will" (British and Canadian Infant School Society 1834, 4).

While few very young children were accommodated in common schools in the first-half of the nineteenth century in Canada, overcrowding meant that there was a "need to get rid of the youngest and oldest students, or, second best, to separate them" (Prentice 1977, 150). If the youngest children, usually those under seven years old, were to have their own schools, the model available at mid-century was the infant school. In Newfoundland, an infant school was established in 1854 in the fishing community of Greenspond to relieve severe overcrowding in the main school building (Winsor 1979). One hundred and fifty of the youngest children were placed in the infant school under the direction of a teacher trained in St. John's, leaving the main school with 120 older pupils. Elsewhere in the Atlantic provinces, infant schools were opened as charity services for poor families, with a combined focus on moral education and basic custodial care, in the spirit of the Montreal and Quebec schools, described above. An article in the Halifax newspaper the *Nova Scotian*, on 8 February 1832, lauded the infant school as a "nursery of knowledge," and stressed the importance of such schools for the poor and the benefits for young children who are "not yet formed." Infant schools as a charity service lasted until the late nineteenth century in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and therefore did not follow the pattern of the Infant School Movement in the United States, which was a quickly diminishing force by the end of the 1830s. As late as 1852, an infant school opened near Kingston in Portsmouth, Ontario. The Portsmouth school looked after young children and taught their mothers to read. In New Brunswick, infant schools were called Madras Schools, in honour of the system established in India by Andrew Bell in the late eighteenth century. Most Madras Schools in New Brunswick were administered by a philanthropic

organization called the National Society for the Promotion of Education for the Poor, established in 1820. By 1843, there were eight Madras Schools in New Brunswick with a total enrolment of 1,000 children. The annual report for the year noted that most were from the “indigent class” (National Society for the Promotion of Education for the Poor 1843, 2).

In Nova Scotia, an infant school was opened in Halifax by a group of wealthy citizens in a room of Dalhousie College in 1833. The Halifax Infant School was directed by a female teacher, called the “lady manager,” according to a report by the *Nova Scotian* on 20 April 1837. The school enrolled about 100 children per day, ranging in age from two to six. The age range expanded over the years, by 1862 including children eighteen months to ten years old. Children were taught Bible lessons and were provided with food, shelter, and clothing. Meanwhile, their parents “at their work [had] the comfort of knowing their children [were] comfortably lodged and protected from harm and also receiving all the instruction suitable to their tender years in a manner that amuses while it instructs the child” (Halifax Infant School Society 1856). The service was offered free of charge. The larger social benefit was derived from helping poor parents “to leave their homes and seek employment that they could not otherwise obtain” (Halifax Infant School Society 1853).

Private Kindergartens

Infant schools developed for several different reasons. In Greenspond, Newfoundland, an infant class grew out of the common school as a result of overcrowding. In communities throughout the Atlantic provinces and in Ontario and Quebec, they were established as charities for poor children. A small number of private infant schools opened for children from wealthy families. However, their development was sporadic and by the 1870s, most had succumbed to a maternalist ideology that called for mothers to be in sole charge of early education and that held the belief that young children were harmed by the overstimulation of their fragile minds. The few remaining infant schools, mostly run by charities in the Atlantic provinces, were joined by an alternative form of early education, Froebel’s kindergarten.

In Montreal and Toronto there was a gap of several decades between the closing of the infant schools and the founding of the first private kindergartens. In New Brunswick, the Madras Schools coexisted for a short time with private kindergartens for children from wealthy families, which opened in Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John. By the 1870s, the idea was well established that all young children could benefit from a formal early education, and mothers needed some assistance (but not replacement) in the complex task of child rearing. The kindergarten was perfectly

suiting to meet this need in a way that respected the contemporary thinking about the nature of children. Rote instruction and the teaching of large numbers of very young children in a single class were discarded in favour of a child-centred approach, which by the 1880s, would be known as the New Education. The spread of the kindergarten philosophy in North America was accomplished in the beginning by teachers trained in Froebel's methods in Germany. The first kindergarten in North America was established in 1856, by Margarethe Schurz in her home in Watertown, Wisconsin. In Canada, the first kindergarten was opened in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Charlottetown in 1870 (Olsen 1955). Private kindergartens were common in larger towns and cities by the end of the 1870s. Ada Marean, who was the director of the first kindergarten established by the Toronto School Board in 1883, had first taught in a private kindergarten in Saint John in 1878.

Kindergartens soon moved beyond their middle- and upper-class clientele to be adopted as a vehicle of mission work and social reform. The kindergarten was well suited to this because of the religious quality of the philosophy and the focus on home and family. Kindergartens with a social reform or mission orientation were known as Free Kindergartens, simply meaning that they were available free of charge. The Free Kindergarten Movement took root in the late 1870s in large cities in the United States, under the direction of leaders such as Pauline Agassiz Shaw in Boston and Alice Putnam in Chicago (Beatty 1995). Free Kindergartens served a similar need as infant schools in the 1830s, by combining early schooling with a custodial service for young children from poor families. The Free Kindergarten Movement was influential in the day nursery field, and kindergartens became established in many day nurseries long before nursery schools were common in more progressive centres in the 1920s.

The best-known Free Kindergartens in Canada were run by the Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association, established in 1892. The Association was a non-sectarian organization led by middle- and upper-class women who believed that the social reform aspects of the kindergarten could provide relief for the poor of Winnipeg's north end. The kindergarten served a largely non-English-speaking immigrant population. The Association worked to assimilate the newcomers by immersing their children in Anglo-Canadian culture. Part of the Free Kindergarten idea was that preschools were effective in quieting the discontent of the working class by teaching children not to question the values of the political and social élite. Kindergartens would "keep children off the streets and bend their faculties in the right direction" (Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association 1908, 9). The managers and teachers believed the homes of immigrant families to be poor child-rearing environments. In 1908, the

directress of the kindergarten spoke of “homes where the children grow up like weeds, with such environments as tend to develop only the lower nature of the child” (Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association 1908, 9). Because poverty was regarded as the result of “shiftlessness or sinful indulgence,” it made sense to remove the children from their homes for a few hours a day to expose them to the kindergarten culture (Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association 1910, 8).

The first kindergarten organized by the Winnipeg Association was located in a storefront at the corner of Logan and Ellen Streets. In the late 1890s, it moved into the Swedish Lutheran Church. The Association purchased the church, but when it was found to be inadequate for their needs, it was demolished and a new building was constructed on the site in 1903. Prior to the Compulsory School Attendance Act in 1916, the kindergarten accepted children from the ages of six to eight. After the introduction of the Act, it moved to accept younger children, aged four and five, since children aged six and older were required to attend school. In the early years of the twentieth century, the kindergarten was attended by up to seventy children per session. This success led the managers to open a second kindergarten in 1907, in a church on Sherman Street, a short distance away. In 1908 it was moved to Alexander Avenue and named the Froebel School. In 1917 this branch school was discontinued. The Association believed that the key benefits of the kindergarten were that it shielded the children “from the hurtful influences of the street” and awakened in them “a love for school – an important item



Free Kindergarten, Swedish Lutheran Church, Winnipeg, 1899

when there [was] no compulsory school law" (*History of the Winnipeg Free Kindergarten* 1910). In some cases, school-aged children were responsible for looking after younger siblings during the day, preventing the older children from attending school. The Association played a role in helping these young caregivers to attend school by providing a kindergarten program for preschoolers. On one occasion, the deaconess learned of a ten-year-old girl who was not able to attend school because she was responsible for her two younger brothers. The Association arranged for her to attend school for two full days and three half days, while her brothers were in the kindergarten.

The Winnipeg Association was devoted to using traditional kindergarten methods, which was evident in their naming a branch in honour of Froebel. From the beginning, the Association hired only trained teachers. Most were educated in schools in Chicago, which at the time was the heart of kindergarten-teacher education in the American Midwest. After the First World War, the kindergarten on Ellen Street gradually shifted from its Froebelian roots until it resembled a semi-structured play school, as the managers sought to follow "modern educationists" (Kindergarten Settlement Association 1921). The program expanded to include unit work on themes (e.g., Eskimos), which were repeated yearly. However, the Kindergarten Settlement Association (the Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association changed its name in 1915) resisted the more progressive aspects of kindergarten work in the 1920s. Following a study leave to visit kindergartens in New York City in 1926, including the one at Teachers College, the Association's teacher concluded that she was not sure of the usefulness of the new methods with poor children who seemed "lost in the freedom." She believed that "children love the organized rhythm and singing games" of the traditional kindergarten (Kindergarten Settlement Association 1926, 12).

The Winnipeg Free Kindergarten Association was not the only organization to provide poor children with kindergarten education in Canada, or even in Winnipeg. One of the first services offered by the Methodist All People's Mission, when it was established in Winnipeg's north end in 1889, was a class for immigrant children under the direction of Daisy Gordon. The kindergarten first operated in a tent and later moved into a roughly built structure at the back of the church. Kindergartens opened later in the Stella and the Sutherland Missions, which were branches of the All People's Mission. The Mission became well known throughout Western Canada for its community work under the direction of J.S. Woodsworth. The aims of the mission kindergartens matched those of the secular Kindergarten Settlement Association – namely, to teach English to the new immigrants; to care for the children while their mothers worked outside the home; and to offer religious training, kindergarten training, and



All People's Mission Kindergarten, Winnipeg, 1904

training in "Canadian homemaking" (All People's Mission of the United Church of Canada 1928). The kindergarten was viewed as a feeder program for Sunday School, and was a weekday version of Sunday School evangelism. The teachers in the mission kindergartens were trained kindergartners, and some taught in both mission and free kindergartens. Other mission kindergartens were established for Japanese and Chinese children in British Columbia by the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, and United Churches.

Some mission kindergartners became leaders in nursery education. Florence Bird, who led United Church mission kindergartens in British Columbia, was the first president of the Vancouver Kindergarten Teachers



International Kindergarten, New Westminster, BC, c. 1920



Miss Elizabeth Baker's kindergarten class in Oriental Home, Victoria, BC, 1915

Association when it started in 1932. The free and mission kindergartens played an important role in the development of preschool education in the early twentieth century. At a time when public school kindergartens were rare, the free and mission kindergartens offered a small number of children the benefit of a well-planned educational program. But their assimilationist character ignored the home language and culture of the children, as did the public school kindergartens. Another category of kindergartens was developed to serve specific populations of children or cultural or religious groups. For example, in 1934 the Jewish community in Montreal opened a kindergarten to promote religious education and early schooling for Jewish children. Its purpose was the opposite of the assimilationist mission kindergartens. A pamphlet described the Talmud Torah Kindergarten in this way: "In the budding minds of our very young the beginning of knowledge and pride in Judaism is carefully implanted. This first step is important as it is the foundation of the work which, step by step, finally sends out into the social, political and business world an enthusiastically loyal Jew and good citizen filled with love for his race and faith" (Talmud Torah Schools 1937).

Starting in the early years of the twentieth century, many private schools for the children of the élite incorporated kindergartens and embraced the latest innovation in progressive education. The photograph of the kindergarten class in St. Margaret's School, a private school in Victoria, British Columbia, in the 1920s, shows children working at



St. Margaret's School kindergarten, Victoria, BC, c. 1920

Froebelian tasks. Private kindergartens, and nursery schools and play schools for younger children were another form of preschool education from the earliest years of the twentieth century. The curriculum was sometimes limited, centring on “courteous speech, taking turns, and playing fair” (Olsen 1955, 84). These schools, which were attended by a very small number of preschool children, were often located in the home of the teacher or, in some cases, the home of a wealthy family who employed a teacher for their own children and those of their friends or neighbours. Some were operated by trained kindergarten teachers and, later, by



Central Neighbourhood House Preschool, Toronto, 1929

graduates of child study programs providing expertise in nursery school education.

Beginning in the 1930s, graduates from St. George's School for Child Study in Toronto established nursery schools in church basements, community centres, and private homes in communities across Canada. Miss Idell Robinson's Nursery School and Kindergarten, which opened in Winnipeg in 1934, was the first nursery school west of Toronto. Robinson was a graduate of St. George's, and her school had the "enthusiastic support and interest" of St. George's director, Dr. William Blatz (Paterson 1966, 119). Some of the first nursery schools that were established for poor children in Toronto, known as charity or free nursery schools, were also staffed by graduates from St. George's. They joined existing charity nursery schools operated by settlement houses, such as the one at Central Neighbourhood House in Toronto. These included the Metropolitan Nursery School and the Woodgreen Nursery School, which were both opened in Toronto in 1937 as United Church missions. The Woodgreen school was reorganized in 1948 under the guidance of Anne Harris, who was later to marry Blatz. The souvenir program of the opening day ceremonies lauded it as "Canada's Foremost Nursery School."

Public School Kindergartens

The kindergarten was a basic element of the New Education Movement, which emphasized learning through doing rather than by lecture or through books (Stamp 1982). Whereas the Old Education used techniques such as recitation and rote learning, the New Education curriculum provided for children to learn by manipulating concrete objects that represented the real world. Other components of the New Education were manual education and domestic science. Public school kindergartens were also promoted by supporters such as James Hughes, chief inspector for public schools in Toronto, as an important force in social reform. In this respect, the public school kindergarten was not unlike its counterpart in the field of mission or charity work.

The first kindergarten in a public school in Canada opened in Toronto in 1883, in the Louisa Street School. It is often claimed that Toronto was the second city in North America to establish a kindergarten within a public school system, the first being St. Louis, Missouri, in 1872. Toronto was actually one of a number of communities to establish kindergartens in public schools in this period. Kindergartens were part of public schools in New Orleans from the late 1870s (Wheelock and Aborn 1935; *History of the kindergarten movement* 1939; *History of the kindergarten movement* 1940) and were opened in public schools in San Francisco, California, in 1880; Newport, Rhode Island, in 1882; Portland, Maine, in 1883; and New

Haven, Connecticut in 1884. Ontario was also not the first jurisdiction to pass legislation for funding kindergartens in public schools. Vermont enacted permissive legislation permitting “all towns and school districts to aid kindergarten schools” in 1886 (Wheelock and Aborn 1935, 35).

The Toronto kindergartens were part of the general movement in the 1880s by progressive school boards to provide a specialized program for very young children at public expense. They admitted children from five to seven years old. The wide age range was a feature of early public school kindergartens in Canada, but it was narrowed over time. Kindergartens were popular with parents and well attended, and by 1895 there were kindergartens in forty public schools (Corbett 1989, 47). In addition to carrying out the higher aims of the New Education Movement for a child-centred education, kindergartens served the purpose of removing the youngest children from the first grade level to relieve overcrowding and offer them a program more suited to their developmental level.

In Quebec, kindergartens were first proposed as a solution to the old problem of “very small children” – those under the age of five – being sent to school. In his report in 1872, the inspector for the Protestant Board of School Commissioners for the City of Montreal (PBSCCM) was moved to write the following: “The large number of very small children that seek admission into the schools demonstrates the need of establishments in which children who have not yet attained the legal school age can be cared for, provided with healthy and instructive amusement and be



Kindergarten under the auspices of the Protestant School Board, Montreal, 1913

trained into habits of cleanliness, order, cheerful obedience, and mutual forbearance, love and helpfulness" (Robins 1872).

The situation was made worse by the Quebec school law, which made public schooling available to children from the age of five. The PBSCCM complained that as a result, "many more infants [younger than five] are sent to school, especially during the summer months, to get rid of them from home, and the little that they learn in the summer is forgotten during the winter" (PBSCCM 1877). Nothing was done until 1885, when a special Preparatory Class was opened for children aged five to seven. The youngest children still attended, but the course of study was different from the old curriculum: "The daily session is for the forenoon only, from 9 to 12, and the instruction given is entirely oral ... It is, in fact, a modified kindergarten" (PBSCCM 1886, 10). The course of studies in the Preparatory Class was regarded over time as a poor match for the children's abilities, and a true kindergarten was introduced in the High School for Girls in 1891. At this time, the school board sent one of its teachers to St. Paul, Minnesota, for training in kindergarten methods. The next year, a second kindergarten opened in Lorne School, and both were filled to capacity. By the end of the decade, almost all schools under the Protestant Board had kindergarten departments.

The key development in the 1890s was the division of the wide age range in the Preparatory Class into three separate levels: Kindergarten (age five), Preparatory Class (age six), and Transition Class (age seven). The Kindergarten and Preparatory Classes were not required, but were recommended "for the benefit of very young children who are unable to enter upon the regular First year work" (PBSCCM 1899, 6-7). The variability in school-starting age was partly due to a lack of a compulsory school law. Schooling was not compulsory in Quebec until 1943. The kindergarten program was markedly different from that of other levels. It consisted of Scripture reading and moral lessons, morning talks, songs and games, the weather record, and Froebel's gifts and occupations. The Preparatory Class did not include any Froebel work, but instead five hours a week were devoted to reading, language, and stories, in addition to calisthenics, songs, marches, drawing, and writing (1 hour 40 minutes); numbers, forms, and colour (3 hours 20 minutes); and Scripture and moral lessons (1 hour 40 minutes). The Transition Class, which was the first regular level of schooling, included reading and spelling (4 hours 45 minutes per week), writing (1 hour), language lessons (1 hour), object lessons (1 hour 20 minutes), Scripture lessons (1 hour 40 minutes), arithmetic (2 hours), drawing (2 hours), singing (50 minutes), and physical training (1 hour 15 minutes).

Other communities in Canada introduced kindergartens as part of the public school system in this period, and for similar reasons. In 1889, a



Miss Hamilton's kindergarten class, Dartmouth, NS, 1909

kindergarten was established in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, by the Board of School Commissioners, who called it the “first free public kindergarten east of the St. Lawrence River” (Payzant 1993, 19). The teacher, Mary Ann Hamilton, had started teaching in Dartmouth schools in 1866; she came to the kindergarten when it first opened. Just as in many public school kindergartens, she trained apprentice teachers in her classroom. Hamilton used strict Froebelian methods and worked with as many as ninety children at a time. The photograph above shows Hamilton and her class along with her apprentice in 1909. A bust of Froebel can be seen resting on a book on Hamilton's right. When she retired in 1916, after a career that spanned five decades, the kindergarten department of the Dartmouth School Commission closed, apparently for economic reasons. In subsequent years, five-year-olds were admitted into a “grade-primary,” with a program similar to the Transition Class in Montreal.

Across the harbour from Dartmouth, the Halifax Board of School Commissioners first discussed introducing kindergartens in 1888, the same year that the province made attendance at school compulsory for children aged seven to fourteen. A kindergarten opened three years later in 1891. By the next year there was a kindergarten in almost every school in the city. Children who were one year younger than compulsory school age were eligible to attend, but large numbers of children younger than six years old also attended. The enrolment varied from school to school, ranging from as few as ten to more than sixty in a class. In the beginning, the Halifax Board operated its own training school for kindergarten

teachers (see Chapter 2). However, a private individual opened a kindergarten department with a model kindergarten as a private venture within the Nova Scotia Normal School in Truro. The Truro School Board took over kindergarten-teacher preparation in 1900, and in 1907 the kindergarten department of the Truro School Board was absorbed within the Normal School. However, because almost all kindergartens in the province were located in the communities of Dartmouth, Halifax, and Truro, the kindergarten department in the Normal School never had more than a few students.

The first kindergartens in public schools in Western Canada opened in Regina, Saskatchewan, in 1891, only eight years after the founding of the city. At that time the settlement was a gathering of tents around the little railroad station. However, it was made the capital of the North-West Territories, a fact that sparked its subsequent growth. Nonetheless, it was still a small city in 1891, with a population of 1,681. Kindergartens in Regina were originally full-day programs, but as enrolment increased, the school board changed this to two half-day sessions in 1899. They also narrowed the age range to ease overcrowding. Even so, children from four and a half to six and a half could attend (Neely 1946). The Regina School Board came to be viewed as experts in kindergarten work in Western Canada. When the authorities in Lethbridge, Alberta, planned to introduce a kindergarten into its school system, they wrote to Regina officials to ask about their experience.

Kindergartens in the public schools of Halifax, Montreal, Regina, and Toronto have continued from their beginnings in the nineteenth century to the present day. Elsewhere in Canada, kindergartens have been more vulnerable to shifting economic and educational priorities. In New Brunswick and Newfoundland there was no provincial support for kindergartens in public schools until recent times, a situation that did not seem to generate any great debate. In Newfoundland, kindergartens were opened in public schools in the late 1960s, and in New Brunswick in 1985. The different timing in the introduction of kindergarten in schools across provinces partly rested in the fact that kindergartens were largely an urban phenomenon, even in Ontario. It was simply too difficult for young children in rural areas to walk great distances to school. When the government of Saskatchewan provided funding for kindergartens in the 1940s, rural schools were not eligible. Nonetheless, there was a modest expansion of kindergartens in Western Canada in the period from 1891 to the First World War. Except for the Regina kindergartens, they all succumbed to hard economic times and disappeared from Western schools by the 1920s. They did not reappear until after the Second World War, and it was not until the 1960s that they reached their earlier numbers. A national survey

of preschools in the late 1950s by the Canadian Education Association found that the only cities outside Ontario to have kindergartens in public schools were Halifax, Montreal, Regina, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg (Canadian Education Association 1965). Although the survey omitted a number of kindergartens in small towns in British Columbia, it highlighted the decline of the public school kindergarten in Canada between the world wars, from their strength in the 1890s.

A pattern of early introduction of kindergartens followed by their termination after a fairly short period was repeated in Nipean, Manitoba (1899-1915), Dauphin, Manitoba (1912-5), Lethbridge, Alberta (1907-24), Edmonton (1913-21), and elsewhere on the Prairies. In Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, a kindergarten was opened in a public school in 1906 and continued until 1934 (Olsen 1955, 49). This pattern was common in many communities in the American Midwest and the Southern and Southeastern states, where the history of kindergartens was described as "here and there" and "now and then" by one historian (*History of the kindergarten movement* 1939, 31). The relatively short life of the kindergarten on the Canadian Prairies meant that kindergarten-teacher training developed late in local normal schools. One of the chronic problems of kindergartens in the west was the difficulty of securing teachers, who were either brought in from Eastern Canada or the United States, or recruited from primary classrooms. Many kindergarten teachers, who were trained in big cities, were reluctant to settle in small, isolated communities (Neely 1946).

However, the main reasons that kindergartens survived or failed were to be found in the decisions of school trustees and administrators, who often acted in pragmatic ways to cope with overcrowding in schools or with budget shortfalls by eliminating aspects of schools regarded as frills. The kindergarten fell into that category, as did other subjects such as music. The kindergartens in western provinces were also vulnerable to the growing criticism of the New Education Movement. Even in Ontario, the Kindergarten Movement had "faltered since the early enthusiasm of the 1880s" (Stamp 1982, 71). Kindergartens had not lived up to their promise as a vehicle for social and educational reform. Nonetheless, as kindergarten attendance declined in Ontario, new kindergartens were still being opened in the west. In Lethbridge, the school board took a pragmatic view. The board viewed the kindergarten as a worthwhile experiment, but at the same time, when it built a separate school for a kindergarten, the board required the architect to make sure that it could easily be converted into a residence (Lethbridge School District No. 51 1985). In the spring of 1907, the district principal in Lethbridge conducted a survey to determine the number of children who would be six years old in September (compulsory

school age was seven years). A sufficient number of children were located, and a teacher from Ontario was hired. The class began in temporary quarters in September 1907, while the “Kindergarten School” was being completed. From about 1912, however, enrolment decreased, reaching a low in 1919, when the age of admission for both kindergarten and grade 1 was set at six years. The kindergarten was terminated in 1924, and the Kindergarten School turned into a residence.

Not much is known about the daily operation or curriculum of kindergartens in Western Canada in this period, other than that it was based on a Froebelian understanding of child development, with the addition of Bible lessons, music, games, and manual training. This was the case in the kindergartens in Edmonton, which were established in January 1913 and discontinued in 1921. Sufficient records of the Edmonton kindergartens exist for us to understand some of the reasons for the early introduction and subsequent termination of kindergartens in the west. During the 1910s, Edmonton kindergartens showed a steady increase in numbers, from four in 1913 to eight in 1920. They accepted children from age four to six, but most were five at the beginning of the school year. The program operated in two sessions, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Each class was staffed by a trained kindergarten teacher and one assistant. The kindergartens were equipped with Froebel’s gifts, as well as mother-play pictures, weaving slats, tapestry needles, scissors, work tiles and tile pegs, crêpe paper, beads, shoe laces, and paper sewing cards. All kindergarten classrooms were equipped with tables with one-inch squares inscribed on the top for use with parquetry squares.



Kindergarten School, Lethbridge, Alberta, c. 1920

Despite their growth in numbers and popularity with parents, the kindergartens never had the full support of the school trustees. Part of the problem was the unpopularity of the man who introduced them into the schools, James McCaig, the superintendent of Edmonton Public Schools. McCaig was known as a proponent of the New Education. He urged the school board to go beyond “the 3 R’s” to include music, household science, manual training, and kindergarten. Although the curriculum did expand to include this broader program, the school trustees did not have confidence in McCaig. Furthermore, they felt that the way McCaig had been selected as superintendent had not followed proper procedures. They did not believe he was a good moral example. He frequented beer halls while on the job, and the news of his drinking habits was reported in the local paper. In the end it was his “moral indiscretion” with a teacher that led to his resignation in October 1913.

With McCaig gone, the progressive components of the curriculum were open to fresh debate. In the fall of 1915, the school trustees tried to eliminate music along with the kindergarten, arguing that it was a cost-cutting measure. However, kindergartens were very popular with parents. Attendance had increased to seventy children per session by 1915. The kindergarten program continued. The bid to close the kindergartens was renewed in 1920, brought on by overcrowding in the schools and economic difficulties. Their proposed closure was condemned by community leaders and private citizens in letters to the school board. Kindergartens were promoted as providing early religious instruction and training for the body and mind. Supporters asserted that closing them would be an injustice to children, who were themselves unable to raise objections; that kindergartens were relatively cheap to operate; and that teachers in later grades found children who had attended kindergarten were easier to teach. The trustees responded that they had never approved kindergartens in principle and that they “object[ed] to public money to supply this sort of day nursery” (Support for Kindergartens 1920). This last point was challenged by a mother who replied, “Our Kindergarten teachers are well trained in particular work, and the average Canadian mother has more intelligence than to regard a Kindergarten as a ‘Day Nursery’” (Madill 1921). Nevertheless, the kindergartens were closed, and the arguments used by the trustees echoed the reasons heard for and against kindergartens in cities and towns across Canada. On the one hand, supporters promoted kindergartens as a way to give children a good start in life and in schooling. In short, kindergartens were an investment in the future. On the other hand, critics contended that they were costly and that the returns on the investment were not easy to determine.

The growth of kindergartens in public schools was stagnant across

Canada until the 1940s. At the start of the Second World War, the only public school kindergartens outside the province of Ontario were located in Halifax, Montreal, and Regina. By the end of the war, kindergartens had opened in Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg. They were created out of a heightened awareness of the welfare of young children that was brought on by wartime conditions, combined with an increase in the number of mothers working for pay. These same conditions stimulated the growth of private kindergartens, nursery schools, day nurseries, and boarding homes. Calgary's first public school kindergarten began as just such a charity endeavour. The Calgary Stagette Club, a philanthropic women's group, founded a preschool in a poor area of the city in 1939, in a move to "keep children off the streets" (Olsen 1955, 59). Called the Tom Thumb Kindergarten, it was located in a classroom in the Calgary School Board's James Shortt School. The Stagette Club lacked the financial resources to maintain it as more than a demonstration program, and they asked the school board to take it over, which it did in 1941. More kindergartens were opened by the board over the next decade. However, in 1954 all the kindergartens were closed because of overcrowding in schools, a shortage of teachers, and a study by a local academic who concluded that the benefits of kindergarten do not last beyond grade 4 (Seguin 1977, 58). As was the case in Edmonton thirty years before, there was a strong public protest over this decision, but it had little impact on the closings. However, the public school kindergarten programs did have an impact on subsequent developments in preschool education in Calgary. There was a carry-over of standards from public school kindergartens to the private kindergartens that developed to take their place following their closure (Olsen 1955). In addition, the Calgary Public School Board assisted parents in forming community-run kindergartens, which marked the start of a "community kindergarten movement" (Seguin 1977, 59).

In Winnipeg, the Free Kindergarten Association worked for decades to put kindergartens in public schools, but school trustees were never receptive to the idea. Despite this, from the early 1890s, the Association ran kindergartens in two public schools in classrooms rented from the board. Appeals were made to the school board in 1914, and again in 1920, at which time the board agreed to pay the salary of a teacher for one term. This arrangement continued until the end of the decade. The official history of the Winnipeg School Division attributed the slowness of the board to sponsor kindergartens on a larger scale to the usual reasons: it was experimental, there were not enough trained kindergarten teachers, and schools were already crowded (Chafe 1967, 99). The situation changed with the Second World War. The number of public schools with kindergartens in Winnipeg grew from four in 1943 to thirty-seven by 1948

(Chafe 1967, 99). By 1958, there were kindergartens in all schools in the Winnipeg School Division.

In both Vancouver and Victoria, kindergartens opened in a few public schools in 1944 as an intervention program for children from poor families, as well as a concern for the children of wage-earning mothers. In Victoria, kindergartens were originally planned for children of mothers employed in war work. The plan called for kindergartens to follow a day nursery schedule and to be open six days a week, from 7:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The plan was abandoned when the province offered to finance kindergartens as an alternative to the federal wartime day nursery plan. One historian who studied the issue observed that the unusual plan showed “no real understanding or commitment to provision of preschool classes on the part of the Department of Education or the Boards themselves” (Weiss 1976, 49). The kindergartens continued after the war, but on their original limited basis, serving just 1 percent of eligible preschool children in British Columbia by 1948 (Weiss 1976, 52). Provincial and school board support for kindergartens continued to be debated on and off until 1972, when kindergarten classes were made available to all children in the province.

The wartime expansion of kindergartens in Western Canada resulted in their becoming a permanent part of schools in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Victoria. However, they did not gain a lasting foothold in Alberta, and there were no kindergartens in the Atlantic provinces other than Nova Scotia. The words of the Edmonton superintendent of schools in an earlier time – “Kindergarten in Alberta has not caught on” (Superintendent 1919) – could be applied to many parts of Canada. In the 1950s, developments in public school kindergartens slowed once again. The Unified Kindergarten-Primary Movement and the takeover of kindergarten training by normal schools meant that the kindergarten curriculum was not always easy to distinguish from the first grade level. However, there were some developments in this period. An unusual initiative was the launching of “Kindergarten of the Air” on CBC Radio in 1947. The daily program was developed out of the CBC’s “School of the Air,” which was an experiment in distance education. The program was modelled on the radio kindergarten in Australia. It fit the general trend in the 1940s of ensuring access to elementary schooling for all children in Canada. The program consisted of songs, stories, and even a rest-time. In a report in *Saturday Night* magazine, Christobel Bendall (1948) described the “world’s biggest kindergarten” as a boon to children and mothers. “When Mother turns off the vacuum cleaner and props the broom against the wall during the brief program and sits down at the radio beside Jimmie and Sally, her time is well spent as she grows closer to her children by sharing their program

with them” (29). The radio kindergarten aimed to connect home and school via technology – a means that would be repeated using television in the years to come.

Other developments took place on the community level. In British Columbia, a number of small towns and cities opened kindergartens in the 1950s, including Vernon, Prince Rupert, Lake Cowichan, and Courtenay (Weiss 1976). In the Northwest Territories, two public school kindergartens opened in the mid-1950s (Olsen 1955, 48). In Quebec, a few kindergartens were established by the Catholic School Commission in Montreal in the 1950s. Although legislation had been in place in Quebec to establish *les écoles maternelles* since 1915, their widespread introduction into Catholic schools was delayed until the school reforms of the early 1960s (Audet 1971). Until then, most *maternelles* were private, a situation that restricted preschools to children from wealthier families.

Child Care in Canada

Many programs with an educational mandate provided child care to some degree. However, even in infant schools for poor children, it was not the primary role. The Edmonton School Trustees’ reference to the child care function of the kindergarten was a call to arms for kindergarten promoters. In the 1890s, day nurseries were established in a few cities in Canada as supports for wage-earning mothers. However, this was not the only reason. At least one was started as a solution to the problem of overcrowding in a school – a move that resembled the creation of an infant school in Newfoundland earlier in the century. It was called the Crèche Nursing Institute (established in 1890), and it was the first day nursery in Toronto.

The desire for universal school attendance in Ontario in the 1880s resulted in the Truancy Act of 1891, which made attendance mandatory for all children aged eight to fourteen. Increased school attendance led to the perception that younger children were left unsupervised while their older siblings were in school. Thus, rescuing young children from the dangers of the streets was a goal of the Toronto kindergartens. The Toronto Board of Education equated the employment of mothers with child neglect, and used this as a rationale for providing kindergartens as a form of publicly supported child care. The inspector’s report for 1895 noted that a kindergarten was opened in that year in the College Street School, for “the little ones whose mothers are occupied away from home in earning money, and who well neglect their children” (Toronto Board of Education 1895, 15). As the earlier discussion of kindergarten has shown, parents commonly sent children who were younger than the official age of enrolment to school. Houston and Prentice (1988) cited a nineteenth-century school inspector’s report of a visit to an urban school in Ontario, which

recorded that “not more than a dozen [children] were older than seven years of age and two-fifths ... were under six” (211). When kindergartens were formed, some of the youngest children in the first grade level moved down the hall into the kindergarten, joined by their even younger siblings. When Hester How was appointed principal of the Elizabeth Street School by Hughes (chief inspector for public schools in Toronto) in 1887, she found that a number of very young children attended the school. She responded by securing a room in the nearby Old Folk’s Home as a nursery for the youngest children, which became the Crèche Nursing Institute. Although some sources maintain that the Toronto Board of Education provided funds for her venture, there is no record of support. Nonetheless, sponsoring a nursery was consistent with Hughes’s other reform efforts.

Infant child care in English Canada had its origins in the Public Nursery in Toronto in 1857 (Prochner 1996a). In the late 1850s, day care for infants was a novel idea in North America. At mid-century, the day care idea, particularly in the case of infant day care, was as unfamiliar to wage-earning mothers as it was to philanthropists. Neither the Public Nursery nor its model, the Nursery for the Children of Poor Women in New York City (founded in 1854), survived for long in their original form. The Nursery for the Children of Poor Women is best known as the forerunner of a children’s hospital. The Toronto Public Nursery was reoriented in the 1870s to become an orphanage for girls. Both the New York and Toronto institutions were originally inspired by the French crèche. In the United States, day care developed an identity that was distinct from other child welfare institutions (e.g., orphan care) earlier than in Canada. The Day Nursery of Philadelphia, founded in 1863, is generally regarded as the first child care centre in North America, after the false start in New York. Industrialization, immigration, and a concern over high infant mortality in cities in the Northeastern United States provided the conditions for the development of institutions similar to the one in Philadelphia. Day nurseries were part of a broad social reform movement – known historically as the Progressive Movement – aimed at improving the lives of children and their families, which included the establishment of settlement houses, charity kindergartens, and children’s aid societies.

Day nurseries were a compromise between the nineteenth-century ideal of mothers nurturing children at home and institutional care in an orphanage. The increased popularity of nurseries in the 1880s may also have been linked to revival of the crèche in France. However, except for the occasional use of the term “crèche” in the names of institutions, the leaders of the Day Nursery Movement in North America largely disregarded their French counterparts. Instead, as the day nursery in North America was reconstructed to meet the needs of both its clients and its

benefactors, it created its own history. Institutions that included “*crèche*” in their name, notably Edmonton *Crèche*, Vancouver *Crèche*, West End *Crèche* (Toronto), Victoria *Crèche* (Toronto), and Hamilton *Crèche*, could not even agree on its spelling or pronunciation. *Crèche* was variously written as “*créche*” or “*creche*” and was often unaccented. Its pronunciation was anglicized, and pronounced *crashe* or *creach*. Journalist Joseph Tinsley related the naming of the Hamilton *Crèche* in the 1890s: “‘But we should give the undertaking a name,’ remarked a lady. Many names were suggested – only one chosen. The *Crèche* appeared to be the favorite title. The news soon spread in the neighborhood that a *crèche* for children was coming. A crotchety old bachelor remarked: ‘A good name, too. The kids will be screeching all day’” (Tinsley 1904).

By 1892, there were 90 day nurseries in the United States, located primarily in the industrialized Northeast, and by 1898 there were 175. The day nursery was sufficiently established as a charity that in 1892, a Conference of Day Nurseries was organized in New York City to discuss the future of the movement. At the second meeting, held in Boston in 1897, a decision was made to create a National Federation of Day Nurseries. In contrast, in English Canada there were three day nurseries by 1892, and only one more by the close of the century: Montreal Day Nursery (1887), Victoria *Crèche* (1890), East End Day Nursery (1892) in Toronto, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union *Crèche* (1895) in Hamilton. The delayed development of day nurseries in Canada had important implications for their future. Because of their small number and regional base, Canadian nurseries did not have a national organization to represent them. As a result, individual nurseries joined either the National Society for Day Nurseries in England or the National Federation of Day Nurseries in the United States. It was natural, therefore, that in the 1910s, when the managers of the West End *Crèche* in Toronto sought a model for their work, they looked to Detroit, Chicago, New York, and London, rather than to the few sister institutions in Canada. As a result, no particular Canadian approach to day nursery work existed (Prochner 1994).

There are several reasons for the slow growth of day nurseries in Canada in the nineteenth century. The most critical is that most cities in Canada did not have the correct combination of population and number of poor wage-earning mothers to provide the basis for a nursery. Day nurseries were an urban invention. A modest expansion of nurseries in Canada took place during the period from 1908 to 1912, as more cities approached or surpassed a population of 100,000. By 1912, six of the seven largest cities in Canada had at least one nursery. However, the need for a day nursery was not based solely on the presence of a large number of wage-earning mothers. In her study of women factory workers in Paris, Ontario, Parr

(1992) noted that child care was arranged privately between neighbours or relatives. Day nurseries were a response by philanthropists to the needs of poor families, which were made worse by city life. Despite its modest size, Halifax had a sufficiently large number of poorer citizens to warrant the Jost Mission's establishing a nursery on its premises in 1910. In some cities in Canada, other institutions provided day care, further inhibiting the growth of day nurseries. Even small cities and towns often had more than one orphanage, which provided short-term as well as permanent child care. And as we have seen, in the 1880s and 1890s, kindergartens met the need for child care for older children.

Child Care at the Turn of the Century

The Day Nursery and Industrial School in Montreal was the first institution in Canada to be established on the lines of the Progressive Era day nursery. The Montreal Day Nursery, as it was later named in its incorporation in 1899, opened in 1887. Originally affiliated with the Montreal Young Women's Christian Association, it provided temporary care for children aged three weeks to ten years. Temporary care, however, did not necessarily mean daily care. A limited number of children boarded by the week while their mothers were ill or employed as live-in servants. On its first day of operation, the nursery admitted only six children. Growth was slow and by 1899, it was still serving fewer than twenty children per day.

A feature of most nurseries in the late nineteenth century was that, unlike the orphan asylum or the religious *asile* in Montreal, they operated on a very small scale. In terms of meeting the needs of greater numbers of working mothers, *asiles* were far more successful. The first *asile* was established in Montreal in 1858. Four other *asiles* were established over the next thirty years, all in Montreal (Cross 1973; Dumont-Johnson 1980). They were popularly used by working-class francophone mothers. The largest cared for as many as 400 children each day from the 1860s to the 1880s. However, *asiles* accepted only children older than three. Wage-earning mothers of younger children had few options for temporary institutional care other than orphanages in nineteenth-century Montreal, and the Montreal Day Nursery played a unique role. It was typical of pre-First World War nurseries in North America. In its early years, it borrowed heavily from American ideas. In its combination of nursery and industrial school, it resembled the Troy Day Home in Troy, New York (the Day Home began as an industrial school and only later expanded to include day nursery work). It served a wide range of ages under one roof. Reasoning that it needed to serve both mothers and children, the nursery opened an employment bureau for charwomen. And as charity organization societies grew in influence in the early twentieth century, it came to see itself as

part of the larger social welfare system. This uniformity of the day nursery was the result of what Neil Sutherland (1976) called the transnational nature of the Progressive Reform Movement.

Victoria Crèche in Toronto (the name given Crèche Nursing Institute when it incorporated in 1905) had a mission that was typical of the Progressive Era Day Nursery Movement: "To provide a home during the day for children whose mothers have to go out to work; to assist in securing day work for the mothers needing it; to encourage habits of thrift among the parents and children, and to enable Christian and charitably disposed women to come in touch with the home life of the mothers and children and take such action as may from time to time seem best to brighten their homes" (Victoria Crèche 1905, 1). By the late 1910s the rationale for the crèche had long since changed from easing the burden on public schools to the more familiar contention that wage-earning mothers frequently sacrificed their children's well-being. In the annual report for 1917, Lady Emily Moss, then president of the Crèche, suggested, "Many a mother, forced by necessity to become the wage earner of the family, would be obliged to choose between locking her little ones in a cheerless room, exposed to many dangers, or turning them into the street during her enforced absence, were it not for the Day Nursery" (Victoria Crèche 1917, 3).

The only competition for the Victoria Crèche in Toronto in the 1890s was the East End Day Nursery, founded in 1892. The East End Day Nursery originally shared quarters with the Sackville Street Mission. Its objectives, as outlined in annual reports, were word for word the same as those of the Crèche cited above. The East End Day Nursery also professed a role in preventing social problems. The 1905 annual report noted, "We come to the aid of people who, perhaps, might become paupers and possibly their children criminals" (East End Day Nursery 1905, 10). The East End Day Nursery was more heavily used than Victoria Crèche. In its first year, it cared for an average of forty-two children per day in a single room. In 1893, the nursery rented a house on Sackville Street and was locally known as the Sackville Street Crèche. In 1905, the managers purchased a house at 28 River Street (it was then called the River Street Crèche), which was the site of the nursery until it closed in 1959 to make room for a housing project for low-income families. The aim in providing a larger facility was "to turn no one away" (East End Day Nursery 1906, 10). The high number of children who attended the nursery indicates that this goal was achieved. Although its average daily admission was 80 in the 1910s, a record 146 children were cared for on a single day. The ever-increasing number of children in the nursery was referred to as "Development of the Work." The number of days of care increased from 13,062 in 1905 to 25,005 in 1909. A



East End Day Nursery playground, Toronto, 1909

two-storey addition was constructed in 1910 to make room for even more children. In 1912, the East End Day Nursery opened a second facility on Main Street near Danforth Avenue (Danforth Day Nursery).

A fourth nursery opened in Canada during the nineteenth century in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1895. The Crèche, as it was first called, was founded by A.M. Waters, a member of the Dominion Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in Hamilton. The Crèche was administered by a board of twenty women who distinguished themselves by refusing to accept financial assistance from the province (they did not agree with the governing provincial party) or, later, from the Community Fund (they did not wish to be "guided entirely by its dictates" [Hunter 1933]). The Hamilton Crèche was unique at the time in that it was not associated directly with a particular religious denomination. Rather, it was part of the work of the WCTU. The WCTU was established in the United States in the early 1870s and grew throughout the 1880s and 1890s under the leadership of Frances Willard. While the WCTU was originally known for its crusade against drinking establishments, it later turned its attention to social programs. Willard's famous slogan, "Do Everything," inspired members to run a variety of programs for poor children and families. The WCTU shared the fear of institutions that was prevalent at the time and organized foster care for homeless children. It promoted kindergartens for poor

children through the sponsorship of Free Kindergartens, the first of which was organized in San Francisco in 1880 (Bordin 1981). The early WCTU kindergartens offered full-day programs and thus resembled day nurseries for older children.

The Hamilton WCTU was formed in 1876 as part of the initial Union expansion. In the early 1890s, the Hamilton group was active in a number of social programs that targeted women and children, including visits to hospitals, jails, the House of Refuge, and the Industrial Home. The Hamilton Crèche was an extension of this work. It was jointly administered by the local branch and the provincial office of the WCTU. It initially cared for children from three weeks to six years old. It provided two unique services. One was the provision of rooms within the crèche for “poor, weak women to gain their strength, who have no friends and have just returned from the hospital,” as the *Hamilton Spectator* put it, in an article entitled “In aid of needy mothers: A good work inaugurated by the Hamilton WCTU,” 30 March 1896. The service was well used, and the Crèche provided 622 nights of shelter in 1904, which increased to 1,720 in 1905, or an average of five women each night. The second unusual feature, in contrast with Toronto day nurseries, was its flexible hours of operation. The Hamilton Crèche was open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with longer hours available in the summer to permit mothers to work picking fruit in the nearby orchards (Tinsley 1904). The availability of lodging and meals for destitute women at the Hamilton crèche highlighted the desire of the early day nursery founders to provide a range of social programs in a single institution. Thus the nineteenth-century day nursery in Canada was a place for women and children to seek assistance in times of need, and was not created solely to provide temporary care for young children.

The Expansion of Day Nurseries

The second phase in child care development in Canada was marked by the opening of nurseries in cities not located in Ontario or Quebec. New immigrants and rural-to-urban migration placed tremendous strain on health and social services in the rapidly growing cities, where these services had been developed for much smaller numbers of poor and needy families. The same conditions that sparked the development of charity kindergartens in Winnipeg and public school kindergartens in Montreal and Toronto led to the opening of nurseries. In the early twentieth century, a day nursery was part of the usual repertoire of services offered by private charities. It was relatively inexpensive to operate, as opposed to an orphanage, for example. All it required was the rent or purchase of a building, which was usually inexpensive real estate. The furnishings were sparse, consisting mainly of donations or cast-offs from the homes of

wealthy families. Staff expenses were minimal, with the key person being the matron, who often also served as cook, housekeeper, and caregiver. Some of the nurseries founded in this period were the Edmonton Crèche (1908); West End Crèche, Toronto (1909); Winnipeg Day Nursery (1909); the nursery in the Jost Mission in Halifax (1910); Ottawa Day Nursery (1911); and Vancouver Crèche (1912). The early years of some of these nurseries are described below.

In December 1908, the Local Council of Women in Edmonton opened a crèche for children of wage-earning mothers, with the ambitious aim of receiving “all neglected, ill-treated or homeless children brought to its door, as temporary or permanent residence, as need may be,” as described by the *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, 5 December 1908 (Lightfoot, Derksen, and Campbell 1997). The following year, Alberta established the Department for Neglected Children, which required every town with a population over 10,000 to have a children’s shelter (Bosetti Piche 1990, 105). In Edmonton, as elsewhere in the province, women’s clubs worked with local Children’s Aid Societies to fill this requirement. Although little is known about this early crèche, the 1908 venture exemplifies the trend in the first decade of this century for women’s clubs to make day nursery work a key component of their service to the community. The Edmonton Local Council of Women had only just reorganized in 1908, after being inactive for a number of years. Its members included prominent Alberta women such as Emily Murphy and, later, Nellie McClung. The honorary president of the Local Council of Women was the wife of the lieutenant governor of Alberta. One of its first efforts in community service was to create a sub-committee to study the need for a nursery. By 1914, the Edmonton Crèche and Children’s Home had largely given up providing daily care.

In 1929, a new Edmonton Crèche and Day Nursery Society was organized by the Local Council of Women as a form of practical work in child welfare, under the leadership of Lady Rodney. By this time, the memory of the first crèche had completely faded, and Lady Rodney was credited with forming the first nursery in Edmonton. The Edmonton Crèche and Day Nursery, which opened in 1930, was, like the earlier crèche, notable for having support from the highest levels of Alberta’s political and social élite. Lady Rodney and her husband, Lord Rodney, were wealthy British immigrants and ranchers in Alberta. Lady Rodney was well known for her support of children in the province and her leadership in the Girl Guide Movement. The honorary president of the crèche was the wife of a lieutenant governor of Alberta, and the honorary vice-presidents included the premier, the minister of health, the mayor, and the archbishop of Edmonton (Edmonton Crèche Society 1931).

The Edmonton Crèche and Day Nursery was established to fill the growing need for daytime care for children of wage-earning mothers. Unlike the original 1908 crèche, the new nursery focused on temporary care. Its aim was the following: “To keep intact the home where the mother is the only wage earner, or where the father’s income is not sufficient to nourish and clothe the children ... To keep such families off relief, and help them to remain self respecting human beings, thus saving the taxpayers many hundreds of dollars annually” (Edmonton Crèche Society 1931, 4). Lady Rodney and the board of directors convinced city officials of the value of the crèche, and the city provided an operating grant and the use of a building. From its start in 1930 until its reorganization in 1966, the crèche was headed by a registered nurse. The first director was Edith World, who investigated each home prior to admitting a child. The nursery accepted children aged nine days to six and a half years, although they were occasionally older. It was open between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Throughout the 1930s, the attendance was stable, but there were rarely more than eighteen children per day. The crèche did not have an educational program until a kindergarten was started for the oldest children in the 1940s.

In Winnipeg, a day nursery was organized by the Mothers’ Association of Winnipeg. The Association was formed in 1906 by a group of women interested in promoting issues related to families. They lobbied for Mother’s Allowances in Manitoba and also played a role in the creation of a local playground association. The day nursery they sponsored opened on 12 March 1909, several months after the founding of the original



Mothers’ Association Day Nursery (now known as Day Nursery Centre),
Winnipeg, c. 1910

Edmonton Crèche; it was an extension of the group's practical work on behalf of women and children. The nursery moved several times before settling in a house at 378 Stella Avenue in 1911, where it remained until 1971, under the name Stella Day Nursery. It was located next door to the Methodist Stella Mission, which operated a charity kindergarten for many years. It still exists under the name the Day Nursery Center, which it assumed in 1953. As was the case with day nurseries in other cities, it opened in the midst of a tremendous growth in population. Services for the poor expanded rapidly to fill a range of educational, health, and social needs: the Winnipeg Children's Hospital, the Stella Avenue Mission, and the Juvenile Court all had their start in 1909. A survey by the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare concluded that by the 1930s, Winnipeg had the "heaviest comparative institutional provision" west of Montreal (Whitton 1934, 43).

The Ottawa Day Nursery also opened in 1909. It began as a service of a settlement house on Rideau Street, and became a separate institution in 1916; its development was typical of nurseries in the period. The managers quickly settled into the business of fund-raising, and the main issues centred on the cost of staff, sickness of children, and the number of children that could be accommodated. At the time the nursery separated from the settlement house, a trained kindergarten teacher was hired. Like the WCTU Crèche in Hamilton, the Ottawa nursery served as a temporary shelter for both mothers and their children, and offered long-term care for children in emergency circumstances. The nursery had substantial financial support from the Fleck family, and in 1932, the Andrew W. Fleck Memorial Building was opened on George Street, with a capacity of seventy-six children. The nursery never enrolled this number until the Second World War, when it reached a peak of seventy-seven children in 1943.

In Halifax, a nursery was established in 1910 as a service of the Jost Mission. The nursery was managed by the mission's Women's Committee. The committee operated an employment bureau for mothers and a nursery for their children, as well as a shelter for homeless children. The nursery accepted children aged three months to six years, with the majority under the age of two. It operated on a very small scale: in the fall of 1918, the daily attendance was generally four or five children. Low attendance was the rule rather than the exception, and the nursery rarely reached its capacity of forty children. In 1918, despite the small number of children served, the Women's Committee expanded the service to include a kindergarten in the afternoon, mothers meetings, and a girls club. The average daily attendance in the nursery increased to ten in 1919, and then to twenty by 1920. The kindergarten was generally well attended when it was in operation, but it was open sporadically, with periods of several months



Ottawa Day Nursery, c. 1920

passing when no teacher was available or when none was hired as a means of cutting costs. In the early 1930s, the managers expanded their services to include care for school-aged children during the lunch hour.

In 1910, a committee of the Associated Charities of Vancouver opened a day nursery, which became known as the Vancouver Crèche. According to Lilian Nelson, who was a city-employed social worker and superintendent of the crèche for many years, the original idea stemmed from a shortage of domestic labourers (British Columbia Preschool Teachers' Association 1974). The crèche's employment bureau was designed to fill this need. The Vancouver Crèche was similar to the Edmonton Crèche in having gained the support of the city. The Medical Health Officer for Vancouver, Dr. Underhill, was impressed with the fledgling crèche, and he was convinced that it could play a role in improving child health. According to Underhill, Vancouver had the highest rate of infant mortality in Canada. Infant mortality had recently received considerable attention in the United States, as the focus of the newly created Children's Bureau under the directorship of Julia Lathrop (Lindenmeyer 1995). As a progressive health reformer who shared this concern, Underhill successfully lobbied to have the City of Vancouver finance the construction of a building for the crèche on Haro Street. When it opened in late 1914, it was only the second nursery in Canada to be housed in a building constructed for the sole purpose of child care. The new West End Crèche of Toronto was the first, having opened in April of the same year. By 1916, a marked drop in attendance due to a shortage of employment for domestic workers led Dr. Underhill to recommend that the crèche be moved to



Vancouver Children's Hospital, formerly the Vancouver Crèche Building, Haro Street, 1919

make room for a children's hospital. The building was deemed "unnecessarily elaborate for [its] present purpose" (*Report on Infant's Hospital* n.d., 1), and it was taken over by the Vancouver General Hospital in February 1917. The crèche's new, more modest quarters were in the Relief Department, in space previously occupied by the Old People's Home.

Although the Vancouver Crèche is often portrayed as a model of progressive reform in child care in Canada (Schulz 1978), it benefited only for a brief time from the enthusiastic support of Dr. Underhill. Eventually, it became solidly entrenched as part of the City of Vancouver Relief Department. While it was always managed as a welfare service, when it was relocated, all new mothers using the crèche were required to have a needs assessment. Even the morning play group organized by Lilian Nelson in 1917 – known as the first preschool in British Columbia – was under the direction of a city-employed social worker. The Vancouver crèche closed in the early 1930s, when the economic depression made it difficult for women to find day work. This was a problem common in some other cities in Canada. The WCTU Crèche (Hamilton) and the Hamilton End Day Nursery also closed their doors. Fund-raising was difficult, and mothers used the nurseries only on a sporadic basis whenever work was available. By the time the WCTU Crèche closed in the early

1930s, it was caring for only three or four children a day (Hunter 1933). Attendance at the Vancouver Crèche decreased by over 50 percent from 1931 to 1932, and the Relief Department did not want to continue bearing the cost. The service was adopted as a project of the Graduate Nurses Association of Vancouver and transformed into a system of foster homes for the children of wage-earning mothers beginning in the summer of 1932. "Foster day care," the term used to describe supervised family home day care or child minding, was considered to be a more economical alternative to centre-based care. In addition, it was better suited to the changing ideas concerning out-of-home care for very young children.

Day Nurseries and the Second World War

The stagnant growth in the number of day nurseries in Canada in the 1930s was dramatically changed by the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1939, most day nurseries in Canada were operated by charities. In 1942, the federal government initiated a child care scheme as an incentive and support for mothers of young children to work in war-related industries (Prochner 1996b). The new demand for child care was created by the five-fold increase in the number of wage-earning women in Canada, from 200,000 in 1939 to 1,000,000 by 1944. The existing day nurseries soon filled to capacity and had long waiting lists. Moreover, their mandate was to serve children of poor wage-earning mothers. Social welfare councils and community groups called for a government-supported child care program. The most vocal and best-organized lobby was in Ontario, where the Welfare Council of Toronto and District sponsored needs assessments under the direction of its executive director, Bessie Touzel. Touzel interviewed 100 mothers on the waiting list of the West End Crèche in Toronto. She found that most families functioned with a patchwork system of child care, and that in some cases, children were left alone during the day in potentially dangerous situations. The government of Ontario responded in April 1942 by amending its Public Welfare Act to include support for day nurseries. In July of the same year, the Canadian government initiated a cost-sharing scheme with the provinces, called the Authorization of Agreements with Provinces for the Care of Children (Canada 1942). In the end, only Ontario and Quebec entered into the agreement. Wider participation was restricted by the requirement that a percentage of mothers who used the nurseries be employed in essential war work, as well as by a lack of interest by other provincial governments and, in some cases, weak support from community welfare councils.

Because the wartime nurseries were tied to labour recruitment, the program was administered by the Women's Division of the National Selective Service in the Ministry of Labour. At the provincial level, the nurseries



Children washing hands, Wartime Day Nurseries,
Toronto, c. 1942



Teacher and child,
Wartime Day Nurseries,
Toronto, c. 1942



Children doing crafts, Wartime Day Nurseries, Toronto, c. 1942



Helen E. Armitage, Wartime Day Nurseries, Unit no. 13, Toronto, 1943

were managed by the Day Nurseries Branch in the Department of Public Welfare in Ontario, and by the Department of Day Nurseries in the Ministry of Health in Quebec, under the guidance of provincial committees made up of bureaucrats, community members, and local experts. The director of the Quebec nurseries was Elphège Lalonde, associate director of the Venereal Disease Division in the Ministry of Health. In Ontario, Dorothy Millichamp of the Institute of Child Study, University of Toronto, directed nurseries at the provincial level. Between 1942 and 1945, twenty-eight wartime nurseries were established in Ontario, and six in Quebec. The Quebec nurseries were controversial and mostly underused throughout the three years of their existence. At the end of the war, the newly elected government of Maurice Duplessis, which viewed the nurseries as a threat to families and Quebec nationalism, terminated the agreement with the Canadian government. All the Quebec nurseries closed in October 1945. In Ontario, community and consumer groups successfully lobbied to keep the nurseries open until June 1946. Twelve former wartime nurseries continued to operate after this time with joint municipal-provincial funding under the Ontario Day Nurseries Act (passed in March 1946).

The wartime nurseries served relatively few families. However, their influence on child care in Canada was considerable. For the first time, group child care was promoted as a normal support for families. “Share Their Care, Mrs. Warworker, with Your Able and Willing Helper, the Day Nursery,” read a headline of the day (Ryan 1942). The National Film Board produced a film entitled *Before They Are Six*, which extolled the benefits of day nurseries for children and mothers: children would flourish under the guidance of well-trained teachers, and mothers could focus their full attention on their work, knowing their children were safe and happy. The film includes scenes of children at play in the training centre for Ontario wartime nurseries in Toronto. A newsletter produced by the Day Nursery Branch mused that mothers may even have sought employment in war industries in order to qualify for day nursery care for their children. The photographs on pages 52 and 53 were taken at the two Wartime Day Nurseries in Toronto. The teachers are wearing Women’s Volunteer Services armbands in the two photographs.

Child Care in the 1950s

In wartime, the day nursery was not a charity service – a last resort for families in dire circumstances – but a day-long nursery school. Press reports added to this transformation by frequently calling the nurseries “wartime nursery schools.” The infusion of nursery education principles into the day nursery meant that the service became oriented toward child rather than adult needs (Varga 1993). Although the wartime nurseries program

did not start this process, it hastened its development and, in Ontario, entrenched it within public policy. The increased need for child care during wartime highlighted the ideological differences within the Day Nursery Movement, despite attempts to forge professional partnerships. Nursery educators saw wartime child care as an opportunity to promote their expertise and philosophy of early education on a national stage. Bessie Touzel believed that the “nursery school [movement] turned to day care to meet its goals” (23 March 1992, interview with author). On the other hand, the leadership of the major organizations representing day care in North America, the US-based National Association of Day Nurseries and, later, the Child Welfare League of America, strongly resisted the idea of child care as a service for wage-earning mothers. They argued that only careful social investigation by skilful technicians could determine whether child care was the appropriate option for a family. The insistence on a casework approach meant that the Child Welfare League of America, the most powerful group representing child care in the early 1940s, was at odds with the wartime function of nurseries as a service for mothers working in war industries. During the war years, the Child Welfare League of America adopted a marginally more conciliatory stance toward child care. After the war and the end of federal funding for wartime nurseries in Canada and the United States, child care settled back into its former social welfare orientation. However, the war experience and the absence of a strong advocacy movement in the 1950s had a profound impact on subsequent developments in child care. The old day nurseries run by private charities were open to new scrutiny. Some found a new mission, whereas others simply closed their doors. Those that did remain open witnessed the invasion of a new cadre of experts. Dozens of teachers and administrators of the former wartime nurseries – many of them nursery educators and child development experts – assumed leadership positions in research, teaching, and government. They proceeded to construct nursery schools within the walls of child care centres, calling them “full-day nursery schools.” The client group of day nurseries also changed, as nursery educators and social workers moved to restrict child care to children over the age of two and a half or three.

The bias against very young children in day nurseries stemmed from the well-documented trend in psychiatry in the 1940s, which emphasized the importance of a child’s secure relationship with his or her mother for healthy emotional development. Group child care was also thought to be overstimulating for young children. The recommended alternative to parental care for children under the age of two and a half or three was foster day care under the calm and gentle supervision of a “day-time mother.” This was the model adopted by the Graduate Nurses Association

when it took over the Vancouver Crèche in 1932. Critics did not make a distinction between the effects of different types of institutional care on human development. Orphanages and maternity hospitals, caring for hundreds of babies, were regarded in the same unsatisfactory light as small-scale, neighbourhood day nurseries. The central factors were the age of the children and the time they spent away from their mothers.

The reorientation of day nurseries was encouraged by the Child Welfare League of America, which participated in social surveys in a number of cities in Canada and the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Study after study found that day nurseries were inefficient social agencies, with inadequately trained staff, and a lax approach to casework. Other surveys were conducted by local councils of social agencies or by national organizations such as the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare. Attempts to reform day nurseries into modern social service agencies were fraught with problems. The introduction of a social work orientation meant that mothers applying for child care were required to demonstrate a need beyond economic necessity. This moved day nurseries away from their traditional position of accepting all mothers who came to their door. For decades, the managers of the nurseries were volunteers who had been involved in the day-to-day operation of the nurseries. The transfer of management to professionals trained in social work or nursery education was a difficult process. Moreover, as day nurseries came to be seen as part of a network of social services for families, the nurseries needed to work cooperatively with other child welfare services – for example, mental health clinics, hospitals, and other day nurseries. For many private charities used to managing their own affairs, this was the most difficult task of all.

The managers of the West End Crèche in Toronto saw the problem as the “integration of state social services with private charity” (West End Crèche 1951, 3). After the war, the West End Crèche continued to make internal changes and by the early 1950s, offered several full-day nursery school programs. All the staff were highly trained, with even assistants having university degrees. In 1947, Margaret Lovatt, previously director of the Protestant Children’s Home, was hired as the director of the West End Crèche. Under Lovatt, the crèche made several moves to provide therapeutically based care for children with special needs, in addition to its service for children of wage-earning mothers. Special-needs children included those with hearing and speech problems, cerebral palsy, childhood schizophrenia, and visual disabilities. Lovatt also worked with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to arrange for the first blind child to be admitted in December 1949. On a number of occasions, doctors referred children to the crèche in the belief that they would benefit from the social experience of being with children in a normalized setting.

The managers of the West End Crèche saw these changes – the use of highly trained staff, the raising of the age of admission, and the inclusion of special-needs children – as a suitable response to push for the modernization of its services. However, by the mid-1950s enrolments had decreased and waiting lists had disappeared; the West End Crèche operated at 60 percent of its capacity. The problem was attributed to the existence of twelve other nurseries within a two-kilometre radius, and the managers realized that if the crèche did not specialize its service they would become redundant. In the end, the West End Crèche chose to undertake a day treatment program for children with childhood schizophrenia. The next summer the West End Crèche admitted on a trial basis a three-year-old girl who had been diagnosed with childhood schizophrenia. This initial experience evolved into a day treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children.

Unlike the West End Crèche, many nurseries in Canada continued to function in a custodial mode, despite the addition of nursery school and kindergarten programs. In hard times, professional teaching staff, who were more costly to employ, were laid off. In some cases, they were replaced by volunteers or untrained staff; in others, the kindergarten or nursery school was simply closed. The Edmonton Crèche exemplifies a day nursery that remained relatively unchanged from its start in 1930 to its restructuring in the 1960s. In 1955, the staff roster of the Edmonton Crèche included just one teacher. The remaining eight staff members were the matron, a cook, five nursemaids, and a laundress. The children's day consisted of long periods of unstructured play, and routines such as washing, eating, and sleeping. Considerable attention was paid to the health of the children, and regular inspections were conducted. The Edmonton Crèche continued to accept infants in the years following the Second World War, a practice that did not seem to be controversial. In 1955, the crèche cared for babies as young as two weeks. An ongoing problem, and an indication of the general neglect of the crèche, was the state of the city-owned building in which it was housed. The average daily attendance had risen from eighteen children in the early years to sixty in 1947, and seventy by 1950. As the numbers increased, the city undertook a series of renovations to ease overcrowding. As a result, the original building, which began life as a private residence, was surrounded by various additions, constructed in 1945, 1947, and 1949. Long before the problem of overcrowding, the building was known to be inadequate for use as a day nursery. In 1944, the city passed a motion to help the Crèche Society construct new quarters. No action was taken, however, and the building continued to deteriorate. Finally, in 1951 the fire marshall condemned the makeshift structure. At this time an Association of Crèche Parents was formed to



Edmonton Crèche exterior, 1951

protest against the demolition of the old crèche before plans were made for a move to better accommodation. The city appeared to respond to criticism, and an architect was commissioned to draw up plans. The superintendent of the Welfare Department recommended that the new crèche use the Ontario Day Nursery Act as a guide for construction. However, the city backed away from its promise, and in March 1952, the nursery moved into



Children doing crafts at the Edmonton Crèche, 1957

the city-owned Family Allowance Building on 102nd Avenue. Despite protests from some parents that the site was inconvenient, the number of children grew in the new quarters, to a daily average of 110 in 1959.

The move was followed by the withdrawal of support for day nursery work by the private charity that had governed the crèche for three decades. While the increase in families using the crèche clearly showed that there was a real need for the service, the board of directors interpreted it differently, and in April 1964, decided to close the crèche. The directors believed that it no longer served the original need of keeping families together and off the welfare rolls. Instead, it catered to mothers who worked by choice. They charged that “such a family is maintaining a higher standard of living at public expense,” as reported by the *Edmonton Journal* in an article entitled “Crèche Board Explains Closure,” 15 May 1964. Public protest did not convince the board to sustain the crèche. However, the city and the United Community Fund agreed to continue the service, and it reopened in June 1964 as the Community Day Nursery. The nursery had a new board, and the crèche was exposed to scrutiny by professionals in the fields of social welfare and early education. The federal Canada Assistance Plan of 1966 provided the impetus for a complete restructuring. Ironically, the new climate of support for child care as a preventive social service in the mid-1960s enabled the crèche to resume its original mission as a support for “needy families.” The crèche was resurrected under a new name in 1966, with yet another new board of directors, under the overall direction of social worker Howard Clifford, who was employed by the City of Edmonton as the first director of Day Care Services.

The Mothers’ Association Day Nursery in Winnipeg was also relatively isolated from trends in the day nursery field in the 1940s and 1950s, leading to the observation, “Day Nursery work in Winnipeg does not even compare favourably with Nursery Work of 15 years ago in the east ... There has never been in Winnipeg a Day Nursery as we know it in the east” (Mothers’ Association Day Nursery 1953). Until 1917, and the opening of the Jeanne D’Arc Day Nursery by the Franciscan Sisters, the Mothers’ Association Day Nursery was the only nursery in the city. In 1934, at the time of the survey of social services by the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, these remained the only two nurseries (Whitton 1934). The job of modernizing the nursery was given to Gretta Brown. Brown, who was originally from Winnipeg, was one of the first graduates from the St. George’s School for Child Study in Toronto. She briefly held the post of director of the nursery school program at the West End Crèche in Toronto, before being appointed director of the crèche, a position she held from 1931 to 1938. After returning to Winnipeg, she was involved in nursery school work as director of two schools located in local United Churches.

As a local expert, she was asked by the Welfare Planning Council to sit on a committee studying the nursery, and she ended up chairing the committee. In August 1953, she accepted the position of director of the reorganized day nursery, a position she held until her retirement in 1976. Brown organized the new nursery to operate on "Canadian nursery school standards," which were drawn from the Institute of Child Study (Varga 1997). Under Brown, the Mothers' Association Day Nursery offered an extended nursery school program in a day nursery setting, and it was the most influential and progressive child care centre in Western Canada for many years.

The Jost Mission nursery in Halifax continued to be what Simmons (1984) called an "arena for missionary effort" (19) well into the 1950s. Its growth away from the "tradition of 19th century women's Christian charity" (13) was limited by the lack of alternative models in Eastern Canada. In 1955, the Jost Mission nursery was the only one in the Atlantic provinces, and it was increasingly marginalized in relation to other social services in Halifax. The local council of social agencies was concerned that the reason for the low numbers was that the nursery turned mothers away in accordance with an overly strict admission policy. During the 1940s, the nursery did not experience the growth in the number of children that, for example, the Edmonton Crèche did. Rather, the enrolment declined markedly from the 1930s. In March 1943, the daily average was ten children. In May 1943, the nursery actually closed for two weeks when it was unable to find staff, who could find better paying work elsewhere. The program for the children was minimal, and one Halifax social agency called the nursery at the Mission a "sort of corral" for children (The Jost Mission 1959). Most mothers using the nursery from the late 1940s were divorced, single, new to the city, or their husbands were unemployed. Many were from areas outside Halifax, having arrived from Cape Breton or the South Shore of Nova Scotia to look for work. The experience of one family with the Jost Mission nursery, over a three-year period, highlights its role as a form of temporary relief. In November 1947, a man inquired about leaving his son at the nursery. His wife was looking for work in Halifax as a waitress. The boy was not admitted until the following March, when the father found work in a factory near the Mission. In June, the child was withdrawn. He was readmitted just before Christmas, while the mother, who was now pregnant, visited her husband in the hospital. In July 1950, the mother worked at the nursery for a short period, while her husband looked after the children at home. She later found employment as a domestic through the Jost Mission. This approach to day nursery work did not fit the new integrated model of day care as a social service that was promoted in the 1950s. The Halifax Council of Social Agencies believed

that the Mission was “interested in the children, they want to do a good job, on the very limited scale they are pursuing to-day. [But] they do not see what a Day Nursery should be, what community responsibilities they have, or any responsibility for the future” (The Jost Mission 1959).

Conclusion

The 1950s saw the introduction of programs in new locations and of new types, in addition to reforms that took place in some of the established nurseries (see Chapter 6 for current types of child care). Child care and nursery school programs were opened for the first time in cities that had previously not had such provisions for preschool-aged children. In 1954, the first nursery school in Newfoundland was opened in St. David’s Church Hall in St. John’s (Sharp 1974, 64). Other programs were established to meet specialized needs, such as the Metro Toronto Association for the Mentally Retarded Nursery Schools and a nursery school for children with cerebral palsy sponsored by the Junior League in Toronto.

Similar programs were opened in communities across Canada, as the preschool field expanded its scope to include all children. Kindergarten education was rejuvenated in the 1960s, as attention was directed toward the role of schools as a force in reducing social inequities. The Montessori system was rediscovered and introduced into some kindergarten programs. Junior kindergartens were opened for children from “culturally disadvantaged” families; these kindergartens aimed to give children a head start on schooling. French immersion kindergartens were established in Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto. Across Canada, kindergartens were influenced by the British Infant School and open education (Canadian Education Association 1965, 1972).

The gradual restructuring of child care as a social service, which began in the 1950s, was given a considerable boost by the introduction of federal funding in the form of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1966 (see Chapter 9). At this time, child care became a national concern, and provinces that previously had few or no child care services developed systems for training teachers and regulating a minimum standard of quality. The growth in child care coincided with an increase in the number of wage-earning women of preschool-aged children, and the rediscovery of early childhood education in North America. Yet as Patricia Schulz wrote in her history of child care in Canada in 1978, “when the government took on major responsibility for day care, it also took on traditional attitudes towards the service it was providing. Day care never outgrew the stigma of its charitable origins or its reputation as a low-status, inferior substitute for home care” (157). The Canada Assistance Plan was aimed at providing services for those “in need” or “likely to become in need” (Status of Women in

Canada 1986, 231). It entrenched a two-tier system of child care, which made working parents demonstrate their need for the service on a sliding scale. In a biting attack on this system, journalist Margaret Kesserling wrote about “Canada’s backward thinking on day nurseries,” for *Chatelaine* in 1966: “We applaud well-to-do parents who send their tots to ‘enriching’ nursery schools at top fees. Yet we let working mothers leave their children on the streets or in makeshift ‘homes’” (41).

Considerable evidence exists that there has been a shift in the perception of child care over the three decades that have passed since the start of the Canada Assistance Plan. A greater integration of education, health, and social services has resulted in the rise of educare as an alternative model to the custodial programs of the past. An understanding of the way early experience can contribute to cognitive gains in young children has led to the use of child care and kindergarten environments as important sites for planned intervention, particularly with children judged to be at risk. A renewed call for the use of early education in the schools as a primary vehicle for social reform has made full-day kindergarten part of the new education and welfare policy of the government of Quebec. Junior kindergarten for even younger children is planned in communities with greater need. At present, kindergarten is available to most children in Canada as part of the public school system. This makes public school kindergartens in Canada virtually a national preschool program. The development of early education in Canada is clearly a topic of such breadth that a history on a national level can only hope to touch on themes and issues. One of the problems in writing the history is that local and regional initiatives often overshadow Canada-wide trends. Nonetheless, the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that services for young children have been a concern of Canadians for the past 200 years. An awareness of this legacy by early childhood professionals, policy makers, and parents may help us to arrive at creative solutions for the education and care of our children, today and in the future.

Note

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